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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the teaching and learning of English as an international language (EIL) makes two proposals. First, the teaching of EIL in Japan should not lead to premature replacement of native English with Japanese English as a model or goal of English education. The change should be in the direction of nurturing communicative competence, and ability to express oneself in international situations. as contrasted with the present emphasis on spelling, grammar, translation, and reading comprehension. Second, it is argued that in order to cultivate awareness, acceptance, comprehsnion, and appreciation of the new English variations that comprise much of EIL, advanced students of English should be introduced to these varieties through reading and listening materials together with the sociolinguistic explanation of their function and status in each society. A 33-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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Some Comments on Teaching English as an International Language in Japan

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English is used for intranational as well as international communication by many peoples of the world. Japanese overseas and many businessmen at home use English as the language of communication with their trade partners all over the globe. The population of non-native English speakers exceeds the number of native speakers, so that the opportunity for communication in English between non-native speakers abound. For the Japanese, the people of one of the world's top trading nations, it is time to consider teaching and learning English as an international language (hereafter EIL).

In this paper, I would like to put forth two main contentions; one, teaching of English as an international language in Japan should not lead to premature replacement of native English with Japanese English as a model or goal of English education. The change should be in the direction of nurturing communicative competence, the ability to express oneself in English in international situations, as opposed to the present emphasis on spelling, grammar, translation, and reading comprehension. Two, in order to cultivate awareness, acceptance, comprehension, and appreciation of New Englishes which comprise the main bulk of EIL, advanced students of English should be introduced to these varieties through reading and listening materials together with the sociolinguistic explanation of their function and status in each society. The discussion in this paper is in the following order. (1) Definition of EIL. (2) Model and target in teaching EIL

in Japan. (3) Cultivating communicative ability and acceptance and appreciation of new varieties of English in the context of EIL.

Definition

What is EIL? How is it related to native English, EFL and ESL? The population of English speakers range from 700 million to 1400 million according to various estimations. The figures include the EFL and ESL speakers as well as the native speakers. Though it is not easy to draw a clear line between EFL and ESL, because individual and national or official status do not always coincide, both types are used for international communication (LoCastro 1987). The prominent fact is that the number of non-native English speaker is rapidly increasing and that ESL speakers are claiming the right for their varieties of English. More and more international and/or intercultural communication are conducted in the new varieties of English.

Smith (1983) attempting to describe this state of the use of English in the world coined terms such as EIAL, English as an International Auxiliary Language, and EIIL, English as an Intranational and International Language. At present these terms are replaced by a simpler term EIL. Smith (1983) states that "English as an International Language refers to functions of English, not to any given form of the language. It is the use of English by people of different nations and different cultures in order to communicate with one another." According to the definition, EIL is a purely functional category which can include any varieties of English sharing a relatively stable common core used for international communication. It follows then, that British English as well as General American English together with Philippine English, Singaporean English, Japanese English, etc. can be considered as having equal membership in EIL.

However, not every linguists agree to this definition. According to Suzuki (1985), international English (Englic) consists of all the varieties of English except the native English which he terms 'ethnic

English.' Suzuki strongly opposes the use of ethnic English in international conferences arguing that allowing ethnic English gives undue advantage to the native speakers. It is true that non-native speakers of English have suffered from elaborate and heavily culturally laden expressions the native speakers use intentionally or unintentionally which put the non-native speakers to severe disadvantage. Non-native speakers have long wanted to protest against the insensitivity of native speakers.

Obviously total denial of native English as international language is impractical and impossible. British or GAE or any other variety of native English is perfectly suitable for international communication on the condition that the speakers avoid using heavily culturally laden words and expressions and extremely complex structures. It is not only the native speaker who needs the training in the use of English in international and intercultural communication but also the non-native speakers, for they too must avoid expressions based upon cultural assumptions (Campbell, Ekiniyom, Haque, Smith 1982.)

Nevertheless, it is true that the growing force of non-native English, especially the intranational varieties which are often refered to as New Englishes brought about the concept of EIL which recognizes equal status to these varieties of English. ESLs have developed into full fledged varieties claiming the right as established variety of English not the deviated form of native English. New Englishes carry out important cross-cultural and interethnic communicative functions which cannot be replaced by native English. Speakers of New Englishes are confident of their English and identify themselves with it. EFL speakers, on the other hand, are less confident of their English as constituting a variety which can claim the same right with the native English and/or New Englishes, though they are well aware that their variety does have distinct accent.

Smith's definition of EIL is purely functional one. But this does not mean that pidgin English which function as lingua franca in some areas can be grouped in EIL. EIL is believed to share a relatively

stable common core rooted in native English (Quirk 1982, Nakamura 1986). Strevens' (1982) new definition of "Standard English" is close to what is meant by this 'common core'.

> a particular dialect of English, being the only non-localized dialect, of global currency without significant variation, universally accepted as the appropriate educational target in teaching English; which may be spoken with an unristricted choice of accent.

This definition though vague, rely much on the already existing native variety of English. Quirk (1983) on the other hand is looking more to the future when he proposes reducing existing native English to form "Nuclear English" with the following properties.

(a) decidedly easier and faster to learn than any variety of natural "full" English.

(b) communicatively adequate, and hence a satisfactory end-product of an educational system.

(c) amenable to extention in the course of further learning, if and as required.

In addition to the above, Quirk gives two negative criteria to be used in deciding what to exclude from native English. Exclusion should not disrupt (1) the grammatical structure of ordinary English, (2) a language-neutral assessment of communicative needs. Thus, concerning modals which is the source of confusion to many non-native speakers, he proposes that "full range of modalities be retained but restrict their expression to carefully prescribed and maximally explicit paraphrases, banning the use of the normal modal auxiliaries altogether." This would seem too drastic a constraint to many speakers of English, both native and non-native.

The definition, the properties, the criteria, so far given do not help us to arrive at any particular form of English. It is clear that extensive research and experiment as well as the maturation of EIL are required before anything close to "Nuclear English" acceptable to the international populace can be proposed. In this connection, I

believe that the Japanese speakers of English can contribute to the process together with the other Asian speakers of English.

Since, under the present circumstances, we cannot pin down the linguistic form of EIL, what we should focus our attention on is the communicative purpose of EIL. EIL is aiming at better communication in international settings. Communicative efficiency is enhanced by the admission of non-native varieties on the one hand, but on the other hand, too many varieties will endanger accurate understanding. Though it is true that the variety of Englishes one comes into contact with in a business encounter is generally not as many as some would fear, one does need the time to get use to the particular pronunciation and vocabulary as well as certain idioms and structures, before one can understand the variety and communicate effectively. In international conferences where large number of nationalities come together in one room and when the time of encounter is limited to several days or several hours, participants cannot get acquainted with all the varieties of Englishes so that effective communication is hampered to a certain degree. It can be said that EIL's centrifugal force calls for more varieties, and centripetal force calls for the common core. No doubt both forces are aiming at efficient international and intercultural communication.

Japanese English as a Target of Teaching EIL?

Does teaching EIL in Japan mean teaching Japanese English at schools? Since Japanese English seems to be accepted relatively well in international communication, it might not be such a bad idea to teach Japanese English instead of native English. It has long been recognized that EFL idea of aiming to speak like a native is totally unrealistic. It is even detrimetal in achieving expressive ability. So, why not drop the native English model and adopt Japanese English model instead!

It is reported that in EFL countries the issues of selecting the teaching model for English is less complex than the ESL countries,

because in EFL countries there is no variety of English which is deeply embedded in the local culture (Smith 1983, Strevens 1980, Kachru 1983). EFL nations generally adopt native English model with either instrumental or integrative purpose. EIL oriented nations choose the instrumental approach, while countries which are interested in learning the culture together with the language tend to take the integrative approach. English education in Japan always had dual aims, and it is only recently that FL is being taught purely as an instrument of communication. The teaching model securely remains native English.

Kachru (1983) reports of the complex linguistic preference found among the Indian graduate students who do not accept the 'nativized' English, nor the RP or GA as model for instruction without reservation. In Singapore, the official teaching model is definitely British English throughout the school system. These phenomena in the champions of New English countries indicate how native English model is deep rooted in the mind of the people, and how difficult it is for the local variety to be accepted as the model for instruction.

What kind of influence can we expect from the concept of EIL to English teaching in Japan. Focusing on the point that EIL encourages learners to speak English with their own accent, Nakamura (1986) claims that the performance target in the classrooms should be 'educated Japanese English' instead of native English. The benefit of this change will be less time spent on correction of phonological errors and concentration on guidance on content of speech. Nakamura (1986) states that "Japanese learners should no longer be told to speak and act like an American or a British." He believes that the change in the target will not bring about lowering of standard nor intelligibility since the prominent difference between Japanese English and the (native) model is only at a phonological level.

I believe there is a number of problems involved in this proposal. Following questions need to be answered. (1) What is the difference between target and model? (2) What is educated Japanese English?

(3) Is it true that phonological difference does not seriously affect intelligibility?

Native English as a model and Japanese English as a target in the same classroom. Is this compatible and justifiable? It may be compatible, if model is taken to mean the ultimate goal and the target an hour to hour graded series of attainment levels. Even so, inevitable question will arise concerning the relation of target and model. If target is Japanese English, why should the model be native English? Logically speaking, admission of Japanese English as a target is a step towards admission of Japanese English as a model.

In second and/or foreign language learning, output or acquisition is usually lower in quality than input and model. But this fact does not justify, lowering the quality of input or model, for that would cause further lowering of the output. On the contrary, we need to ameliorate the quality of the input and the manner in which it is presented as well as the methods by which production on the students' side is promoted. Since there is no clear understanding of what Japanese English is, giving students target different from the model is not going to make the learning of English any easier, nor teaching more effective. It will be cause of confusion rather than remedy. Cultivating expressive ability can be done without changing the model or target to Japanese English as many newly developed teaching materials based upon communicative method show. Teachers should not be fooled into believing that changing the target to Japanese English will solve the toughest problem of English teaching in Japan, the nuturing of expressive ability.

The second question is what is educated Japanese English? Who decides what educated Japanese English is? How do we differentiate it from plain or ordinary Japanese English? I believe no one, at present, can answer these questions. Nakamura (1986) does not define what he means by educated Japanese English in his paper. If educated Japanese English is a variety of English spoken by those who teach English professionally and/or returnees who received education in

English, that variety is the result of learning English with the native model and target. If educated Japanese English is the variety spoken by average college graduates, no English teacher would consider it suitable as target in the classroom. True, Japanese speak English with Japanese accent. However, that does not mean that there is an accepted variety stable in form and expression called Japanese English which can function as a model or target for English education.

Another important point is that even though there are many Japanese who are learning English and there are many English words and English-like words used in Japanese language, English is not yet embedded in Japanese culture. There is no literature written in Japanese English. Moreover, I have yet to hear of Japanese placing pride and ethnic identity in Japanese English. Even in many ESL countries teaching model is not the local variety but native variety. In an EFL country like Japan, we need to be more concerned about intelligibility of EIL rather than the educatability of a local variety which is in the stage of infancy.

The third question is on the relation of phonology and intelligibility. Can we say that phonology does not affect intelligibility seriously? From my experience as an interpreter at international conferences, I disagree with this claim. I could not make out what some of the speakers were saying because of their pronunciation and intonation, though later when I was shown their manuscript I found out that their written English was close to perfect. I am sure many people who have heard many varieties of non-native English have the same experience. Pronunciation is no less important than vocabulary and grammar in achieving intelligibility. In oral exchange, the most prominent manner of intercultural communication, it is often the most important element. If it is true that phonological differences do not affect intelligibility seriously, why is it necessary to expose and train the students to understand varieties of English as all scholars of EIL insist. One must get used to the characteristic prosody and structure as well as the cultural meaning behind the

expressions of the variety before one can understand it freely. This requires time and effort. So, phonological differences affect intelligibility to the extent that knowledge and training of the variety is necessary in understanding the message.

Since large majority of English learners all over the world are studying under the native model, native-like English will be more readily understood by the peoples of the world than any local variety. Though there are considerable difference even among the native varieties (British English, American English, Canadian English, South American English, Australian English, New Zealand English) not to mention regional and class dialects, I still believe that they share an important common core. Asian varieties of English often disregard the number, and person agreement, gender difference and often omit articles. Should these phenomena be regarded as potential of New Englishes or just plain errors?

Then, there is also the fluctuation between basilect, mesolect, and acrolect of the non-native kind (Platt and Weber 1980, Platt, Weber and Lian 1984). Inclusion of non-native English will only add to the already existing confusion on which variety to choose in teaching English in the classrooms. My conclusion is that, replacement of native English with Japanese English as a model or target is not only unadvisable but also practically impossible even from a EIL stand point at this stage.

Cultivating Expressive Ability and Appreciation of New Varieties of English

The biggest implication of the concept of English as an International Language to teaching of English in Japan is the necessity to cultivate expressive ability in English. In international conferences, Japanese are said to demonstrate three Ses; silent, smile and sleep. This kind of behavior should be done away with as soon as possible. Ability to express oneself through speech and writing should be valued more and listening and reading comprehension less. In this respect, fluency

should be stressed before accuracy. However, in the college level, accuracy should receive due attention, for post-graduate activities in any area of work require accuracy. Speaking ability starting from conversational level must be carried up to the formal speech and debate level. Essay is not a sufficient level for college English writing course. There should be guidance in descriptive writing, expository writing and thesis writing. Students need to learn to present arguments, support them with data and logic.

In regard to the above program, proficiency oriented class division need to be carried out. Relatively unified program for the first year university students seems to be the general practice. However, pedagogically speaking, since there is individual differences in linguistic ability as well as the academic interest, the courses should be varied and flexibly adjusted. The assesment of students' ability in English should be made in detail each semester and it should be utilised for class placement. At the same time, the emphasis placed solely on the language in the general English courses need to be revised to include general education oriented content. It is reported that constant focusing on the target language sometimes inhibits the linguistic performance psychologically and that combinatory acquisition method which refers to the acquisition of language in combination with a totally different discipline is more effective in language teaching (Zettersten 1986). Of course, the availability of suitable teaching materials and qualified teachers not to mention the administrative complexities involved is a problem which need to be tackled.

Another important aspect in teaching English as an international language is to teach courses on international subjects in English. One of the shortcomings of the so-called general English courses at the university is the poor intellectual level of the content. The focus is placed on the language so that the content very often is shallow and unstimulating. Teaching subjects related to international communication, international exchange, international law, politics and economics in English will no doubt be more up to par with the cerebral function

of the students than learning to shop in the department store, or describing people's face or clothes. Of course, the students will need to work harder to understand the topic, but what they get from their labor is language plus preliminary knowledge of their interest area. Moreover, there is no doubt that such courses will be very effective in preparing the students for international encounters.

Another issue in teaching EIL is to prepare the students for encounter with non-native varieties of English. Nakamura (1986) proposes that non-native varieties of English should be intruduced in the area of listening and reading comprehension. However, I believe that exposing the students to only the linguistic form and structures of these varieties is not enough, for they may have developed negative attitude towards non-native varieties of English during high school years. In order to cultivate awareness, acceptance, comprehension and appreciation of new varieties of English, it is necessary to impart the knowledge of the linguistic conflicts, their political as well as emotional implications, the role English plays in multi-ethnic, multilingual countries, and much more. The understanding of complex psychological attachment the people of India has on English or the reason why English is the first language in Singapore where the national language is Malay is indispensable in enhancing acceptance and appreciation of these varieties.

For example, Indian English is known for its characteristic retroflexed sounds and -ing construction for stative verbs. "Ram was knowing that he would come." "I was doubting it." (Platt, Weber, Lian 1984). Those with school English bias will regard these phenomena as errors or deviations. The social status of English in multilingual multiethnic India with long colonial legacy is not easy for Japanese students who are living in monolingual nation devoid of such experience to comprehend. During the independence movement, English was attacked as the symbol of colonial rule and native tongues were hailed. However, serious and violent political conflicts concerning language policies which followed after the independence still

exist today so that in some regions students have to learn four languages: mother tongue, official language, link language, and a foreign language (Khubchandani 1983). Forty years after independence, English still is an associate official language and a language for higher education. Understanding of ethnic, political, social, psychological meaning of the Indian English is indispensable in cultivating acceptance and appreciation of this variety among the Japanese students. I believe this kind of knowledge can be transmitted to students even before college as a part of a course in international understanding.

English teachers may say that such sociolinguistic matters are outside the sphere of language teaching. However, EIL is basically a sociolinguistic concept focusing on the context of situation (international and intercultural setting), and social function (international intercultural communication). Therefore, if we exclude the sociolinguistic features from the presentation of new varieties of English it will be merely exposing the students to New Englishes, not teaching EIL.

At the same time, EIL is a concept which needs to be grasped in the context of intercultural communication.. Better communication among the peoples of the world by means of English. That is the purpose of English as an International Language. Foregoing discussion was presented with this purpose in mind.

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